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MEMORANDUM

[Completely outside the system]

## NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

CONFIDENTIAL/SENSITIVE (XGDS)INFORMATION

October 30, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: WILLIAM J. JORDEN

SUBJECT: Release of Captain Villa

*Thanks. [Signature]*ON-FILE NSC RELEASE  
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

Per our conversation:

You will recall the case of Capt. Jose Villa, master of the Johnny Express which was picked up by the Cubans in December 1971. Earlier this year, we managed to get his release from the Cuban jail where he had been held. The Cubans released him to Panama with the understanding that he would receive some "punishment" and not be released immediately.

We have now managed to get Villa's release from Panama. He was tried on some technical violations (the Express was under Panamanian registry) and the penalty assessed was the time he has already spent in Panama. Incidentally, he was well treated by the Panamanians. He was not jailed but rather allowed to live in a small village where he tutored students, etc.

We expect he will be flying home to his family in the next few days. I have informed the family that they can expect him home soon. I also advised against press comments--especially any criticism of the Panamanians--noting that we may want to use this channel to help others in the future. They agreed.

They are also deeply grateful to the US Government and the President for this action.

We should, of course, make no public admission of our role in this matter.

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